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Mayor Tom Barrett Calls for Community Response to High Infant Mortality Rates

Infant mortality is everyone's responsibility and the community must work collectively and collaboratively to address Milwaukee's crisis, said Mayor Tom Barrett during a press conference at Southside Health Center on January 24 to announce results from a comprehensive analysis of Milwaukee infant deaths and stillbirths.



"We will need to tackle multiple issues, including some that are very difficult, like poverty, unemployment, low educational attainment and racism," he said. "There is a role for every person and every group, and at the same time it's clear that no one individual or organization can do it all."

The 2010 Fetal Infant Mortality Review (FIMR) report summarizes what is known about factors that contribute to Milwaukee's high number of stillbirths and infant deaths in an effort to reduce infant mortality, and eliminate the racial and ethnic disparity seen in those rates.

But equally important, the report provides critical steps that must be taken to make positive changes in our city.

The City of Milwaukee Health Department has overseen Milwaukee's FIMR project for more than 15 years. Among the findings in the report:

- From 2005-2008, there were 499 infant deaths and 308 stillbirths in Milwaukee
- Black infants were nearly three times more likely to die than White infants
- These deaths are especially concentrated in zip codes where levels of poverty, joblessness and other social and economic challenges are also high
- The most common causes of infant deaths are complications of prematurity, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) or accidental suffocation (including unsafe sleep environments), and congenital abnormalities and related complications.

During the press conference, Mayor Barrett also urged Milwaukee physicians and healthcare systems that work with at-risk women to attend the Health Department's second annual infant mortality summit this May. The summit will focus on prematurity, the leading cause of infant death, and will feature a nationally-known keynote speaker and panel of local experts who will share the most critical steps that physicians and healthcare systems can take to help bring down Milwaukee's prematurity rates.

To view the report, please visit http://www.milwaukee.gov/2010_FIMR_Report